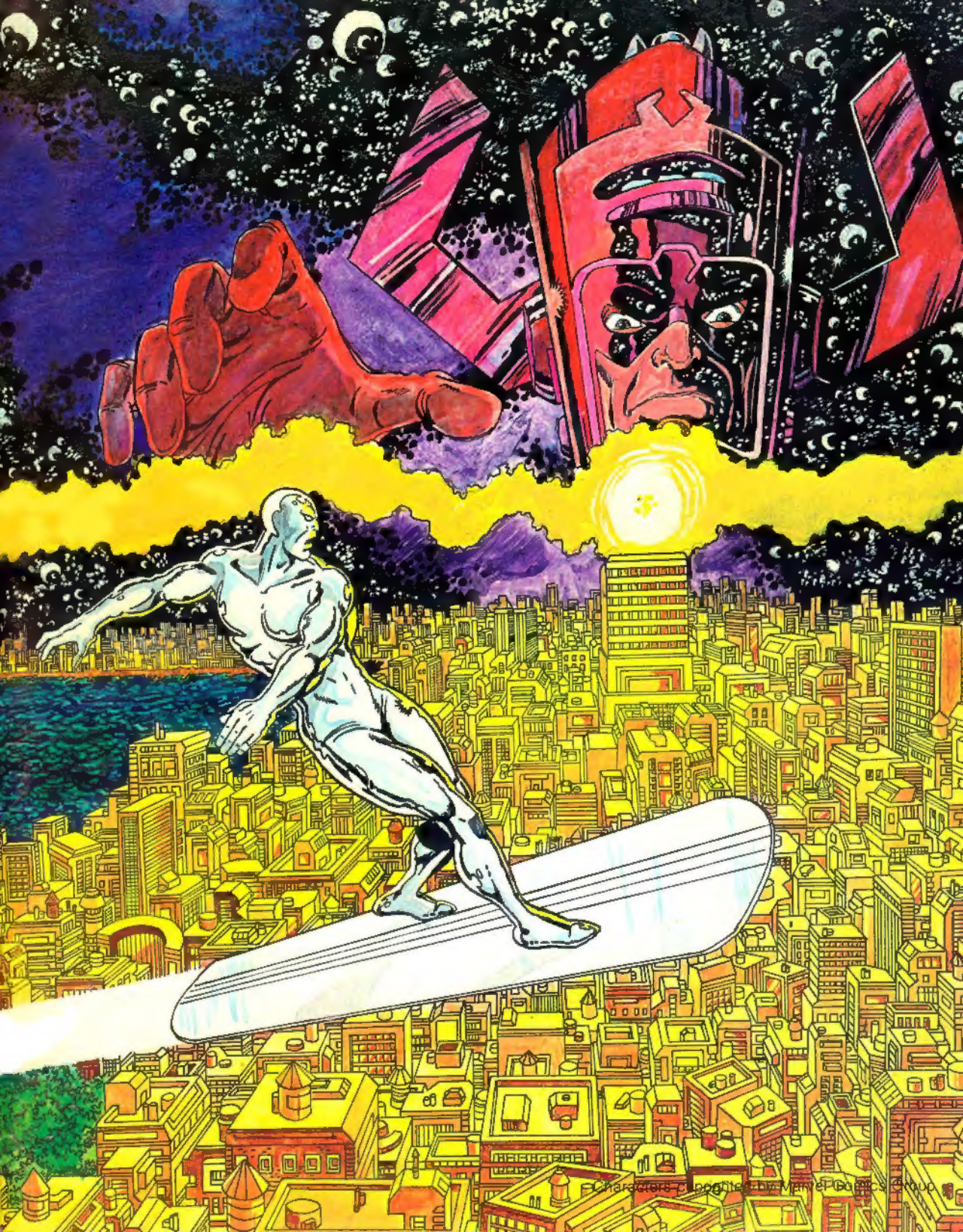
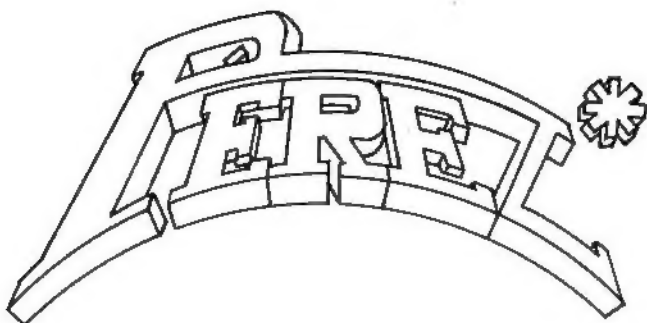








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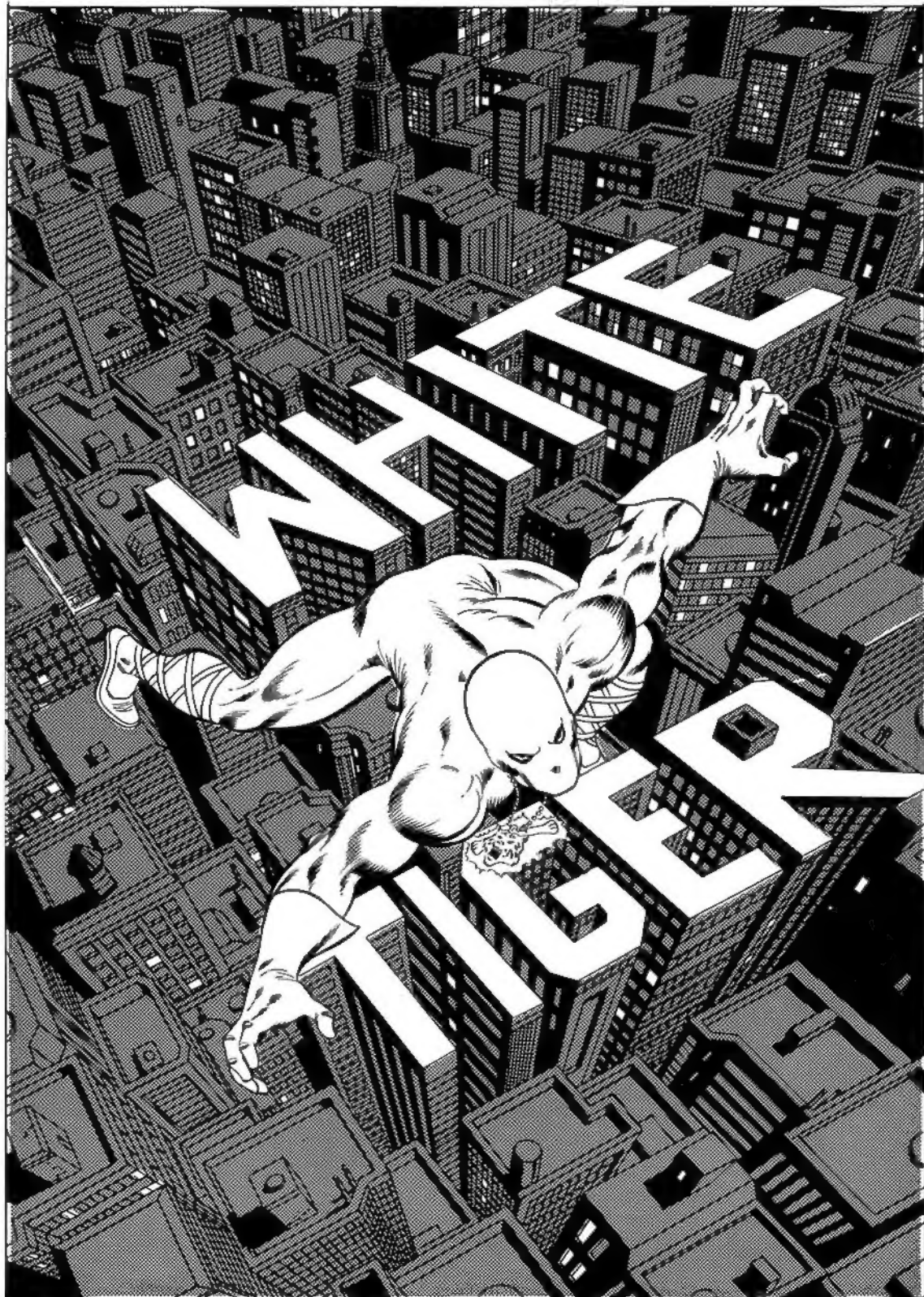
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* ACCENT ON THE FIRST 'E'

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a Bchry Scan

SONS OF THE TIGER



PEREZ: ACCENT ON THE PERSONAL

by Ralph Macchio

"Ahhh, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp else what's a heaven for."

—Robert Browning

Today we exist in an age of impersonal forces that buffet us about, buy and sell us, and finally forget us entirely once our use to them has been served. As we continue to be forced into compartments of conformity, so the great wheel of society may grind on towards what ultimate end none of us will know, we strive mightily in our own way for individual expression. Each of us seeks the means to escape the ties that bind—be they family, job or social status. Our deepest longings die aborning in the cold light of the "real" world, as we're told the foolishness of our fantasies. But the fruits of day-dreaming have taken endless shapes throughout the ages; this we know because there were men who thought enough of their sense of wonder to record its impressions for the benefit of other dreamers to come. Zeus, Odysseus, Hermes, Athena—they have always been with us, though each age has wrapped them in a different cloak perceptible only to those wise enough to see. And now they have found form and substance yet again—in the four-color pages of the comic books, of all places. A new generation of scribes has arisen to chronicle wars of the Gods, as well as the more modern exploits of beings culled from the wellsprings of the atom.

GEORGE PEREZ IS ONE OF THESE SCRIBES!

At the age of 23, when most young men are only preparing to make their contributions to the world, Perez has already touched the imaginations of multitudes, as his pencil gives life to the personal visions of his mind. He has been blessed with the gift of true creativity and so has chosen to share these visions with us. Thus, the idea behind this testimonial. We invite your participation in the experience of Art.



I. BIRTH

Poor neighborhoods and artist's birthplaces seem to have a strange affinity for one another. George Perez was born June 9th, 1954, to Jorge and Luz Maria Izquierdo-Perez. His birthplace was the infamous South Bronx where he lived the first nineteen years of his life. George was a resident who saw the neighborhood decline from a status of good to the abomination it has become today. Environmental conditions aside, young George displayed a early talent for drawing which he expressed on—of all things—a clothes hamper, at the age of 5. Perez's younger brother, David, also showed some artistic potential during his own formative years, though he gave up sketching and has never taken it up again. But for George, as he relates it: "I kept on drawing, it was the love of my life." He had always been interested in the word-and-pictures format of storytelling and he received substantial enthusiastic support from his kindergarten teachers, who were suitably impressed with George's early sketches.

Any child really fascinated by comics will begin to create their own characters in imitation of what most impresses their young minds. Perez was certainly no exception:

My first, which I drew on the hamper was the Rubber-Band Man. It was just a rubber band with a head on it and the head was the hardest part to draw. After him, I began creating and drawing a super-hero group designed to make the Legion of Super-Heroes look small. I had over forty characters prancing around.

An interesting aside about those early Perez creations is how uncannily they antcipated later Marvel superstars:

For example, one guy I named the Bat who was blind, but had developed radar senses. This was years before Marvel's DAREDEVIL. And then I created someone called Putty Man, who was a Mr. Fantastic type. Of course I invented a few characters who were obvious, such as a man who was invulnerable; that was a Superman rip-off. Then I created a jungle hero with long, blonde hair, who pre-dated Ka-Zar. And I'd never heard of the pulp Ka-Zar either.

There were others as well, including an unconscious Legion of Super-Heroes pastiche called The Kleptomaniac Kid—whose name, amazingly enough, young George spelled correctly. As is evident, Perez's fertile imagination worked overtime in the beginning as he displayed an amazing bent towards creative expression of a highly specialized nature.

The already established comic characters were given the special Perez treatment in those dawning days, too. George first tried his artistic hand at THE BATMAN, X-MEN, and CAPTAIN AMERICA. They were crude attempts, to be sure, but the germ of later genius lay hidden in those first, fumbling attempts.

Perez went from kindergarten up through the fourth grade at PS 65. For his fifth grade studies, he transferred to a catholic school in the South Bronx named St. Luke's. There he was encouraged by a particularly attentive art teacher who felt George could go a long way in the art field. When Perez prepared to attend high school, he tried out for the School of Art and Design.



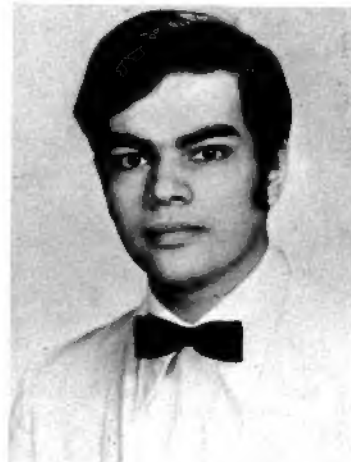
A neighbor of mine got all these scraps of artwork I had laying around the house and arranged them so they looked like a portfolio. I brought them to the proctor at the art school and they gave us applicants a test. We actually had to sketch a girl who was standing up on a table. Being ahead of my time, I sketched the table, the blackboard behind her, everything I could see. On the strength of the portfolio and that sketch, I was accepted to the school. If I could look at that piece of work now, I'd probably be ashamed of it.

George's mother disapproved of the art school, preferring that George attend a Catholic high school so he wouldn't separate from his faith. George may have protested the decision, but moms can be pretty persuasive at times; and so George attended the Cardinal Hayes Memorial Catholic High School—where such notables as George Carlin dropped out. Following his freshman year there, Perez attended a special scholarship camp (Camp Rising Sun) over the summer. He had been accepted due to his exceptional, though still developing, artistic abilities. George found ample outlet for his talents there; and ever the creator, he even parodied the name of the camp in a small cartoon strip he did for self-amusement entitled: "Camp Raving Sun". It was the "Don Martin Department" from MAD MAGAZINE—a la George Perez!!

Returning to high school, George suddenly began to display an aptitude in yet another area—writing. As an extra-credit assignment in English class, he wrote several short fiction pieces. One of these was titled "Rumble!", a violent story whose name seems self-explanatory. Another story he called, "The Bitter Earth", which dealt with narcotics and a third story, "Outlaw... In a Savage Land", about a desperado who attempts to escape via rocket.

George may have been reclusive, but he still found time for the fairer sex. While still in school, George met the girl he would someday tie the marital knot, Yvette Olmeda, otherwise known as Yvie. Their relationship wasn't always idyllic and the couple even broke up at one point; but on September 6, 1973, they were married:

When she saw my artwork for the first time, Yvie nodded her head in approval. She was looking at my "Battalion" comic, which was just pasted together. She also read "Rumble!", and felt I was a writer, too. I told her my ambition and she backed me all the way. In fact, if it wasn't for her prayers, I probably wouldn't have had the stamina to go on because in the beginning I had a lot of disappointments. In the long run, the only person who can really help you besides yourself is someone close in your family.



II. GROWTH

George Perez has had virtually no professional art training. He's been a self-taught man since the age of five when he first placed stubby, clumsy fingers around thick crayons on hampers, paper bags and the like. But with the interest in drawing increasing almost daily, so grew the latent abilities. As George continued to ply his pencil in high school, he became friends with two schoolmates who were deeply involved with comics fandom—Tom Sciacca and Seaton Hancock. Although at the time, George was very interested in comics from an imitative standpoint, he lacked the knowledge of where to showcase his work. Fortunately for George, and the comics industry, Sciacca was equal to the task. Recognizing the potential of Perez, Tom pushed him into sending samples of his pencilling to the various fanzines that served as the comic book training grounds for raw talent. A young artist or writer who can make a name for himself in one of these amateur publications has opened the first door of possible employment at one of the major companies.

Perez's initial attempt at having his work published was a submission to "Star-Studded", a small fanzine in Texas. He received a rather curt, cool refusal in the mail several weeks later. Undaunted, George soon travelled to his first convention, which was coincidentally the first "Star Trek" Con ever held. Gatherings of this type are normally considered gala events; for George, however, it proved to be an eye-opening, if not debilitating, experience:

When you're in high school, or any type of school where most of the kids are not artists, you receive all the glories. They say, 'Wow, George Perez can draw! Hey, that's beautiful stuff!' Once you go to a convention and try to show off your art, you're totally unprepared for the onslaught of people who know fanzine art and can sometimes be very, very cruel. At that time my art style was oriented towards Neal Adams. I used a flair pen because I figured that's what the professionals used, and I lettered my work myself. Frankly, I was raked over the coals. People commented on my lack of anatomy and perspective, etc. I felt very low after that because it was the first time I'd received any kind of criticism.



The event proved to be fruitful in an unexpected manner, for it brought George into contact with fanzine editor Sal Quartuccio, who was responsible for "Phase", one of the finest fan-oriented publications ever put out, though but one issue appeared. After perusing George's work, Quartuccio put him in touch with Jim Glenn and Pat O'Neill, who were publishing a fanzine called "Factors Unknown". They were impressed enough with what they saw to ask Perez to contribute a piece for their second issue. George combined his gestating talents with those of his original fan contact, Tom Sciacca, to produce a short five-page story called "Stranded". It was probably the most abysmal piece

of work ever published with the Perez name on it. Although it was considered fair for a fanzine, by professional standards it was of no consequence. But George had no intentions of giving up. Instead, when the third issue of "Factors Unknown" was due to be published in early 1970, Perez took a much more active hand in the book's production; really coming on strong. The book succeeded. It sold out, though that hardly launched George or Tom Sciacca on the road to instant stardom. For that third outing, George did a two-part story featuring self-created characters called The Death Squad, in a story entitled "Cynthia". Perez took charge of the whole affair, writing, drawing and lettering it. It was still much too crude to ever appear in any professional magazine, but with the increased amount of space George had to work with (20 pages, as opposed to issue #2's 5 pages) the all-important storytelling sense began to seep through onto the page. The second half of the story had been written and drawn several months after the first part and even in strict artistic terms, the pencilling vastly improved. He used a flair-tip totally for the first half and then experimented with other pen types in the second. Unfortunately, the reproduction on the latter part was markedly inferior. Regardless of this, George displayed the earmarks of his later to be well-known style. "Factors Unknown" #3 is, in a way, a landmark not to be overlooked in the Perez odyssey. The ability to tell a convincing story in graphic terms is one which needs sufficient exposure to evolve; with "Cynthia" George was making significant inroads in that direction.

Sal Quartuccio, after seeing Perez's performance on "Factors Unknown", asked George to work on another fanzine entitled "Hot Stuff". For that George produced a minor abomination called "Uncle Sal and Cousin John Go Planet-Tripping". The title was an inside joke and the story was about as funny as a rubber crutch... Next, George contributed a short piece, "Legend of Kazo-Nal", done virtually overnight for a fanzine put out by Tom Sciacca called "Conjure". Following that tale, Perez created, wrote and drew the finest fanzine work he'd ever worked on in any capacity: "Hot Shot" featuring the She-Devils. Despite the exceedingly high quality of this publication, it disappointingly failed due to poor economic planning by the publisher. In many ways, it compares favorably with some of George's professional renderings.

III. EXPERIENCE

Perez's work on that fanzine marked the last appearance of fan artist George Perez. He would next make his debut as a professional artist in comics; but was still several, sometimes disappointing, years away.

In 1972, after graduating from high school, George went to the offices of National Periodical Publications looking for a job as a comic artist. He was pleased with the results of an interview he'd been given by National's production chief, Sol Harrison. From there, George was put in touch with National editor, Joe Orlando, who referred him to artist Neal Adams (who has aided any number of new people hoping to enter this business) and he provided Perez with several valuable suggestions. He felt that George still needed too much training to be taken in as an assistant. It's a judgement, which in retrospect, George agrees with. Neal suggested that Perez do more sketch work; look at the world around him for inspiration and influence, and not simply comic books. He felt George should learn true anatomy, perspective and foreshortening. The advice was taken gratefully to heart; however, George was still

sensitive about criticism and thus Adams' comments had a somewhat less than salubrious effect on the young artist's attitude at the time. To put it mildly, George felt shellshocked and remained in a kind of creative vacuum until the July Comics Convention of 1973, held in New York City. National had just started a project wherein new artists could submit their work for professional scrutiny called the "Junior Bullpen Program". If the material was presumed to show promise, the artist was put on staff up at D.C. and there learned his trade under the supervision of the pros. George once again showed his pencilling progress by bringing along two short pieces he'd done for fanzines called, "The Contenders" and "Day of Man, Night of Wolf". It was well done, though it was produced during a period when Perez was under the highly illustrative influence of Marvel artist Barry Smith. Unfortunately, George took the most avant-garde elements from Smith's work, and this was a mistake. Instead of emulating Barry's solid storytelling, Perez was copying techniques, such as montage backgrounds, wierd angleshots, etc. This was precisely the type of imitation a new artist should avoid and Sol Harrison was understandably unimpressed. George Perez had taken one giant step backwards in his quest. In fact, George subsequently attempted to enter comics five times by knocking on the door of National Periodicals. Each time he failed to display the proper artistic password.

But all was not as bleak as it seemed. While applying for the "Junior Bullpen Program" George ran into them Marvel penciller, Rich Buckler. When George first met him in 1973, Buckler was really beginning to make a name for himself as an artist. He had just taken over the graphics on a certain FANTASTIC FOUR series. He'd done the BLACK PANTHER strip and had worked on THOR, among others. The relationship which developed between Rich and George was often stormy; in many instances it was mutually beneficial, in others, unfairly one-sided. A short time after they'd met, Rich introduced George to then Warren Publications editor, Bill DuBay. In a nutshell, Perez and DuBay hit it off like a Rabbi at an American Nazi Party revival meeting. George, self-admittedly, had a rather cocky, smart-aleck attitude back then which was a false cover for very basic feelings of insecurity.



Bill DuBay left an incredibly bad impression on me, so I wrote a letter to Bill saying I did not want to work for Warren. I felt it would be compromising my ethics if I worked for him at all. I was just damned upset. It could also have been that I was damned insecure, too. Needless to say, he sent the letter back, saying that he didn't respect the fact that I didn't have the guts to come in and tell him in person. Bill said he'd seen many people who came in to see him, claimed to be good, then fell apart when the going got rough. The strangest thing was to have him state that I had potential and more talent than Buscema, Kubert or Infantino had at my age. The fact that he gave me a compliment scared me into trying a story for Warren Publications, written by Carl Wessler. Bill saw it and was going to send it to one of the inkers that worked for Warren named Martin Salvatore. The inker refused to touch it. He said it was the worst stuff he'd ever seen.

At this point, even the novice could discern that George Perez's comics career was not exactly exploding with atomic intensity. Actually, it seemed more in the fizzling firecracker range. George was depressed and feeling badly. He was working as a bank teller, which is not a career known for its many advancement opportunities or sterling future. And so, sad to say, the struggling kid fell on all fours and proceeded at a dead crawl in no direction. A phone call he received in the midst of this black depression began the long climb out of a very steep valley; it was from Rich Buckler. He wanted to take George on as his assistant for as long as he could handle the work. Considering his circumstances and the truth of that old aphorism, "Any port in a storm", George fairly leaped at the chance. Not only was it a much needed creative break, but it meant roughly one hundred dollars more a week, varying according to the workload. However George's elation was severely short-lived, as he discovered he'd chosen to learn the comics business from a difficult artist:

The first thing we worked on together was a tryout AMAZING ADVENTURES issue for Marvel featuring Killraven. It was the only issue that Rich drew. He didn't do full pencils, he did breakdowns or rough layouts. It's incredibly hard to learn from someone who's doing this, because he's faking a bit. He knows what he's doing in his mind; but when it's not down on paper, it's hard to follow. And back then Rich, himself, was at a stage where he had more to learn.

Still, the Killraven story worked out well and George moved on to assisting Rich on the BLACK PANTHER series. Perez laid out most of the issue (which never saw print) and it was a good experience for a fledgling artist. Buckler had his own ideas on how the story was to be drawn. He insisted that the issue be done in a Jack Kirby style and so George was forced to look through many, many comics drawn by Kirby to find suitable poses of the Panther for the purpose of copying, or (as it's known in the trade) swiping, them for this new tale. It was a technique George abhorred, but was obliged to carry out as an assistant. And though Perez was performing much of the work, he felt he was getting little in the way of financial remuneration (five dollars a page) to make it worth his while. George was also annoyed that he could do a considerable amount of layout work for Buckler and if it wasn't found to be acceptable, Rich could reject it, have George do it all over again and still pay him the same five dollar amount:

According to Rich's rationale, sometimes he had to take the whole page and do more work on it and other times would leave it as it was. But due to the fact that one

THIS PAGE MUST BE
REDRAWN -- SEE FULL SCRIPT.



WHERE ARE CHAK + HERU?
WHERE ARE THE TENTS OUTSIDE
CITY.

G. MCG

ABOVE CORPSE
SHOULD BE DRESSED
MORE LIKE ONE OF
THE HITLER-PEOPLE.



counterbalances the other, five dollars a page seemed adequate, if you assume Rich was getting twenty-five dollars to my five and also that I was doing one-fifth of the work. I felt I was doing more than that. Rich disagreed with me.

George realized that he'd have to be doing twenty pages a week to simply make one hundred dollars. He was actually making considerably less than that, especially with a goodly amount of material being rejected. To make ends meet, George began overworking himself and his mental exhaustion played havoc with his regular bank job. It wasn't long before Perez was fired from that position because of an incident involving his accidental discarding of a wad of twenty-dollar bills in a trash can, due to lack of sleep. After being fired, George seemed to have nowhere else to turn and he became a full-time assistant for Rich Buckler. But again, the tenuous relationship was growing increasingly frayed as George did more work for the same small page rate. In addition to this, George was not receiving mention in the credits of any art job he'd help Rich out on. Upon realizing this, Buckler decided to find an appropriate showcase vehicle for George's talents that would provide a modicum of public exposure. That "vehicle" almost drove George Perez out of the business, fueled by fifty gallons of embarrassment.

Rich had assigned George the task of finishing the largely uncompleted pencils on a story for Marvel's **MONSTERS UNLEASHED** #8 called "A Martian Genesis" featuring Gulliver Jones, Warrior of Mars. Originally the story had been given to Rich and inker Pablo Marcos, but when the work came due, deadline problems bogged the project down and the bulk of the labor fell on neophytes George Perez and (inker) Duffy Vohland. This was to be the initial outing on which the comics reading public would learn of the name Perez. It was an unqualified disaster. Rich Buckler was spending most of his time on his pet project, Deathlok, in Marvel's **ASTONISHING TALES** and thus George was left alone. Perez freely admits he wasn't ready for it—and it shows. Does it ever! In addition to the fact that George did not have the necessary reference handy on several of the things required in the story, pages were lost

that Rich had done layouts on and so Perez was forced to finish off the last few pages completely on his own, winging it, as it were. All throughout, figures are disproportionate, perspective is totally off and the backgrounds are almost nonexistent. Needless to say the readers' reactions were somewhat less than an ebullient outpouring of warmth for the newcomer. They were more akin to: "Lynch George Perez before he can strike again!" And because Buckler had handed the layouts to George with such an incredibly tight deadline, Perez felt he'd been, in effect, thrown to the lions by his partner.

In an attempt to salvage his new, though already tarnished, image, Perez went around Rich Buckler for his next assignment and spoke directly to then Marvel black-and-white magazine editor, Tony Isabella. On his own, George had done an inventory story called "Sea Wolf". Tony liked it and bought it; though it angered Buckler that his assistant had circumvented him in the process of finding work. Rich and George exchanged some unpleasant words, after which, Perez and Buckler decided to break off relations and George actively sought art jobs from Marvel on his own. Ironically, it was Rich Buckler himself who furnished that work for George a mere week after their break-up. In what must be interpreted as a gesture of sincerity, Buckler phoned Perez and informed him that Marvel needed a fill-in story for a **CREATURES ON THE LOOSE** feature entitled "Man-Wolf" (#33, January 1974). This was really the break George needed to get back on his still unstable artistic feet; and what an auspicious comeback it was. Although the actual drawing was still somewhat amateurish in comparison with what George does today, it still worked. The solid storytelling style for which George would receive affirmative notices had survived intact the "Martian Genesis" fiasco. Writer Dave Kraft requested that Perez be made permanent penciller on the strip and the Powers-That-Be at Marvel agreed. The "Man-Wolf" series proved to be an adequate testing area for the growing artistic prowess of George Perez during the five bi-monthly issues he remained on it. It was during that short-lived stint that a definite Perez style became evident to the readers and fans; a style encompassing cinematic

stop-action sequences combined with occasionally large explosive panels for effect. And, though the inking was viewed by George as not always being up to par, Perez's actual skill at pencilling improved and always was able to show through. Still, it wasn't all rose petals and raves along the way. Inker Klaus Janson, who worked over Perez's first "Man-Wolf" story, redrew quite a bit of that issue—including Man-Wolf's head and many of the backgrounds. Klaus explained to George much of what he'd been forced to fix and also how to rectify his mistakes. Again, Perez was still quite sensitive to criticism, and so he was initially dismayed, though in the long run he was helped tremendously by the advice.

The "Man-Wolf" series opened up another unforeseen opportunity for Perez to pursue, and, even more than that loping lycanthrope, it has borne his very distinctive mark: "Sons of the Tiger" appearing in the black-and-white DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU title. Tony Isabella, who was editor of that magazine for awhile, was highly reluctant to give George the go-ahead on that strip, largely due to the unfortunate "Marian Genesis" incident. In fact, it was really through attrition that George received it. Simply put, there was no one else available back then of any competent professional caliber to handle the series. Perez was given a fill-in assignment for DEADLY HANDS #6, featuring the Sons of the Tiger. He worked off a full script by writer Jim Dennis as opposed to the normal Marvel method of operating which includes plotting sessions and a rough outline from which the artist works. With the story completed, Isabella was pleased enough to allow George to remain on as permanent penciller. Frank Springer, who inked the issue, would not redraw what obviously needed redrawing as Klaus Janson had done on "Man-Wolf" and in comparison, Perez's first "Sons" outing appears far more crude than his initial "Man-Wolf". That "Sons" appeared in black-and-white medium rather than color only glaringly exposed the numerous errors and awkward drawing which pervaded many of the panels.



The following issue, Bill Mantlo, who up until that time had been a colorist, was given the scripting reins on that series. And so it was a most unlikely duo of inexperienced professionals, Perez and Mantlo, who were chosen to make the strip into a competent piece of work. But what they lacked in experience and know-how, they more than made up for in sheer, unbridled enthusiasm. In DEADLY HANDS #7 the "Sons of the Tiger" story was inked by Bob MacLeod, who did a considerable amount of redrawing with some uncredited aid by the Neal Adams Continuity Studio. With George's drawing still so weak in the penciling stage, MacLeod faced a truly formidable task and thus refused to ink another Perez story for quite awhile. And it's understandable, for the inker is actually only supposed to go over what the penciller has provided for him, if full pencilling was done, and it's not the inker's place to redraw objects, people, etc. Perez was also receiving his fair share of criticism from the new Marvel black-and-white magazine editors, Marv Wolfman and Don McGregor, neither of whom were fully pleased with Perez's performance. And not strangely, the next couple of inkers who worked on "Sons of the Tiger" expressed the same dissatisfaction with the artwork as George's previous embellishers had. An added disadvantage to inking George's material was the noticeable lack of fine lines, an aspect of drawing which literally abounds in his current output. The problem then was actually more of a circumstantial nature, though, than any inherent defect in Perez's style. George was using a manual pencil sharpener and would often draw half the page using the same point, which created muddy lines and unclear rendering. This is a veritable nightmare for the inker, which no doubt, in part, was responsible for the wide berth most embellishers gave George's art back then. He eventually did buy an electric pencil sharpener—but only recently did he purchase a drawing board.

A turning point in the series came in DEADLY HANDS #11. In addition to winding up the long-running plotline, the art featured the beautiful inking of Tony DeZuriga, the important Filipino find, whose unique style has added so much to many American comics. Tony took Perez's pencilling and rendered some exquisite effects which pleased both George and Bill immensely. Editor Marv Wolfman was still complaining, and rightfully so, about the continued use of faded backgrounds, zig-zag lines which confused readers and crooked shock lines which were ineffective. Beginning in issue #12's "Crack of the Whip" story, Perez began to tone down on these amateurish excesses and concentrated on perfecting his anatomical portrayal, perspective work and his backgrounds.

That same issue marked a new plateau for Perez with the welcomed introduction of the first in a long line of visually distinctive supportive characters who peopled the strip until its end. One of the most popular figures brought in was one Nathaniel Alexander Byrd—Blackbyrd as he's known to readers.

Bill's original idea was to have an Isaac Hayes type character, somewhat like Truck Turner, with bald head, moustache and heavy beard. Basically he was to be a big, tall, macho guy. They were quite surprised when I introduced him as a rather short, pot-bellied eagle beaked black man with a bald head, derby and cigar. The readers were incredibly taken with him because he was so unconventional. In the original concept, I felt he was too much like one of the main characters, Abe Brown. But with his nose done deliberately as a beak to make him look like a "black bird", he became a being unto himself.



THE
**SHE-
DEVILS**

BY GEORGE PEREZ

George and Bill also gave to the one character who amazingly supplanted the Tiger's Sons and became the lead protagonist in the series: The White Tiger. Because George was the only Puerto Rican artist working in comics, the two co-creators decided it was time to present the world's first Puerto Rican super hero. Bill felt that Hector Ayala (as George had named the White Tiger's civilian personage) should have a flaw of some type that perhaps it would be interesting if he was a drug addict. But Perez's wife, Yvie, herself Puerto Rican, rather shrewdly pointed out what a pejorative stereotype they were enforcing if they went the addict route. And with her persuasiveness, the White Tiger became a straight, law-abiding fellow who derived his troubles from his dual identity. He became a kind of Hispanic Spider-Man, misunderstood by the people and hunted by the police.

For his penultimate swan song as artist on the series in DEADLY HANDS #21, Perez sculpted a visual masterpiece opening page splash on "To Claw The Eyes of Night".

For our supposed last story, Bill asked for a splash page of the White Tiger prowling over some buildings with his name appearing on the rooftops in perspective. The final result took me ten hours to draw and Jack Abel four hours to ink. Even now, it's looked on as some of the best pieces of perspective drawing I had done up until that time.

That page has been reproduced here within the portfolio. To even the casual observer, it's obvious that more labor was applied to that single page than many artists put into a whole story. The drawing is effectively symbolic without getting lost in a morass of pretentious effects for their own sake.

George returned to "Sons of the Tiger" after nearly a year's absence for one final story in DEADLY HANDS #30, that showed how truly phenomenal his development had been during that hiatus. This was a confident George Perez who was beginning to master the intricacies of graphic storytelling that but a few short years before, seemed impossibly distant. It must be stated, that as a visual touchstone of the realized potential of one artist, "Sons of the Tiger" is virtually number one in the Perez collection.

IV. FRUITION

An early and vociferous critic of Perez's, Tony Isabella, had not been unaware of the progress made by the young artist and he asked George to do a story with him in one of Marvel's higher priced black-and-white titles: UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION #2. The piece was entitled "War Toy" and it received an enormously enthusiastic response from the readership. George was asked back to do another story for the next issue of UNKNOWN WORLDS, this one, "Occupation Force" was an adaptation of a Frank Herbert short story by Gerry Conway. Although not as acclaimed as "War Toy", it nevertheless garnered its share of accolades.

Tony wanted to do a story about a lighting machine robot and thus "War Toy" was created. The actual design of the robot belonged to Mike Kaluta and not me, although I received credit. Truthfully, I don't think I would have designed it that way, but it seemed to work. It got great reviews and my career was steamrolling. Then I did "Occupation Force" which was adequate, but not spectacular. I don't think Klaus Janson, who inked it, was overly proud of it either. But, suddenly, I was in demand.

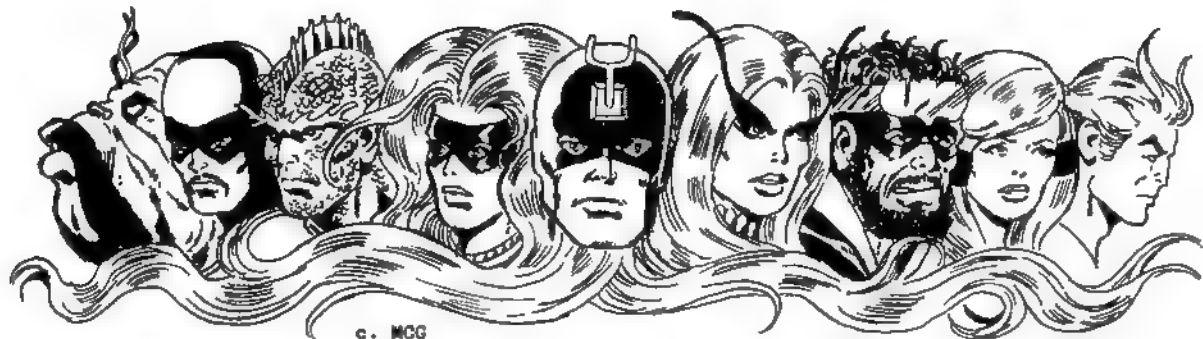
And then the supremely important breakthrough came which catapulted George Perez from comic book artist to superstar status: his assignment to the "World's Greatest Comic Magazine", THE FANTASTIC FOUR. George drew a story, written by Roy Thomas, originally scheduled to appear in an F.F. giant-sized special. It never did. Shortly after its completion it appeared in the regular FANTASTIC FOUR title in issues #164 and #165. Roy enjoyed his short stint with George and asked him back for two more fill-in issues immediately following his first two. Perez was far less pleased with the outcome of #166 because of the inking it had received, which distressed George. Rich Buckler (then regular penciller) came back to do the next two issues and then George returned as of issue #170, to remain as permanent artist.

And at the same time he took over THE FANTASTIC FOUR, Perez himself requested another title which carried almost as much prestige as the F.F. That book was THE AVENGERS.

I had just seen GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #4, which featured the wedding of Wanda and the Vision. I thought it was artistically the most abominable thing I had ever seen in THE AVENGERS. In the wedding scene itself, Thor looked like one of those Mego dolls. It was so bad I asked Bill Mantlo, who was working as production assistant to John Verpoorten at the time, if I could do the next AVENGERS giant. He said he didn't see why not and I told him I couldn't do it any worse. Being the cocky kid I've always been I believed I could do it better. My cockiness started wearing down when I realized no one was out to get me, they were merely trying to get out a good product. The giant-size books were cancelled before I could do the AVENGERS so I asked if I could take over the regular book. The writer, Steve Englehart, was actually looking for someone to replace the artist he had, so Marvel showed him some of the artwork from the "Sons of the Tiger" prison story and Steve said it would be fine if I were given a tryout. That was on issue #141. With a few issues off here and there, I've been a permanent penciller ever since.

And that wasn't all. The group of heroes who had become such popular supporting characters in the FANTASTIC FOUR magazine were about to receive their own title: THE INHUMANS, in early 1975. George was tapped again as artist, though he remained on the book for





no more than five issues. At that time, Perez was doing no less than four group books, three of them monthlies. It was an unprecedented task for such a relative newcomer, but George took it all with increasingly steady strides. The climb to the top had been short, though incredibly steep, and George knew he still had a great deal to learn about honing and refining his command of the graphic story medium. The next testing ground wasn't long in coming.

In early 1976, Marvel Comics received the rights to adapt the popular science fiction film, *LOGAN'S RUN*. Gerry Conway was the assigned writer (although David Kraft handled all but the first issue) and George Perez, at the urging of his wife, accepted the pencilling honors. This was a new challenge for that young star, now beginning to burn brightly in the Marvel firmament. To handle it, he dropped (temporarily) his art chores on *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* and *THE AVENGERS*. The project ran smoothly enough until midway through issue three when George suffered an unexpected, though temporary, paralysis of the extremities. It is a true measure of the spirit of this man that despite the frightful illness, Perez continued as best he could for as long as he could to fulfill his commitment. But tragedy had been averted and the strange malady passed leaving in its wake many grateful people, both in and out of the comics industry. When George returned to his regular features after completing the adaptation his art had progressed again, though in subtler, less explosive ways.

LOGAN'S RUN was an incredible teaching experience because I learned to adapt from a wide screen to the restricted form of the printed page. I condensed a two hour movie into eighty-five pages spaced out over five issues. Originally they had asked that I squeeze the movie into sixty-eight pages and that would have been incredibly hard. I also learned to draw a background realistically to try to capture the flavor of the mood because there were going to be many fans of the movie I had to please. I also began to learn how to condense scenes without having the story suffer.

LOGAN'S RUN was an exceptional artistic springboard for George because doing a faithful adaptation of something in another medium is a fine disciplining experience and a chance to experiment with new techniques of style if the artist is so willing. Working from photographs, Perez picked up lessons in how to draw the human figure with more attention paid to the niceties of the anatomical structure than ever before. His sense of cover design evolved also, due to the fact that he regularly did the covers for *LOGAN'S RUN* and George has now begun doing them often for other books. Perez's sense of shading objects for high lighting or blending effects has grown at a rapid pace. Overall, *LOGAN'S RUN* has helped add a

sophisticated polish to his art, giving it that indefinable something which separates competent artwork from true graphic rendering. George has been made all the better by the experience and the super-hero buying public has received a far more proficient artist in return.

V. IMPRESSIONS

And that's where Perez stands at the moment. We've covered his work, but what of the man himself; how does he view any given story he's assigned before tackling it? Before anything goes down on paper, there are numerous mental processes which first must be accounted for:

*The first thing I do is build up to a certain piece of action and make sure I've left enough room for it. Since I've been working on group books, one thing I strive for is how to have as many people in the story doing something constructive and yet still able to react off one another. In every story I try to find one sequence or shot that I can really make spectacular, something I can dedicate a really large panel to. One example was the Washington, D.C. spread in *LOGAN'S RUN* #4. That was the centerfold where they saw the Washington Monument. I made sure that it got in the middle of the book so it would be unbroken. Another example was the shot of Galactus and the Thing in the last two pages of *FANTASTIC FOUR* #172. It's always a challenge, though one thing I do find boring is when the background is the same throughout a given story. When I was given a western to do in the *AVENGERS*, I had never done one before, so naturally I was pleased, because of the different setting. But there are exceptions to that, such as the case of a very interesting storyline. In *FANTASTIC FOUR* #177 the entire thing took place totally inside the F.F.'s headquarters. But the introduction of those new characters kept it interesting, like the Texas Twister, the Osprey, and Captain Ultra. I put everything I have into every page I draw. I'm notorious for my detailed downshots of buildings, my spans, my machine-filled backgrounds, anything that will make a page more spectacular or interesting I'll try.*

Perez is also notorious for his love of group-oriented titles. In fact, whereas other artists view them with consummate dread, he seems to thrive on them. George is intrigued with the obstacles inherent in handling large numbers of characters. And he prefers having the chance to draw as many Marvel figures as he possibly can. Obviously the desire is not enough, the ability must also be present; and he has that in ample supply. Storytelling came as second nature to him, considering how many movies and television shows have passed before his eyes, it isn't surprising.

THREADS OF EVIL Web of HATE!

I PROBABLY GAVE THOSE BOYS IN THAT HARBOR PATROL CHOPPER A DOUBLE CORONARY WHEN I HOVERED NEXT TO THEM AND LISTENED IN ON THAT POLICE BULLETIN!

IT SAID THERE WAS A RIOT GOING ON IN THE SOUTH BRONX--AND THAT THE WHITE TIGER WAS THE CAUSE OF IT!

THE TIGER'S MY FRIEND--AND HE WENT THERE TO TRY AND TRACK DOWN MY FATHER'S MURDERERS WHILE I RECUPERATED IN THE HOSPITAL!

BUT THIS IS ONE BATTLE HE WON'T FIGHT ALONE!

NOT IF JACK OF HEARTS CAN HELP IT!!

THE LAST ISSUE--
JOHN.

prologue



In the beginning I was admittedly a weak storyteller, but, as I was improving and concentrating my mind on the mechanics of drawing, it seemed that the cinematic aspects took care of themselves. I had an inborn sense of knowing how to lay out a page so that everything worked. I knew how to tell a story basically, it was the other things which needed work. Eventually, I got them all together into something that not only looked good, but had that exciting feeling you get from a well done Marvel comic.

In this age of the shrinking comic book, the job of conveying that "exciting feeling" becomes increasingly difficult within the restrictive confines of seventeen pages. If Perez had his druthers, the ideal situation for him would be doing a large group title of thirty-five pages per month. With that amount of space he believes he'd have room for a mammoth story and a chance for each character to get involved without overcrowding. And concurrent with his wish for a larger format, George is also concerned with how the poorer quality of reproduction affects his finished artwork; and he sees a greater burden being placed on the makers to insure the final product is a readable one because of this.

Of course questions dealing with formats and reproduction inevitably leads to a speculation on the future of comics, about which Perez believes if they are to endure as the prime examples of this medium, those who toil in the field will have to become visionaries of a sort, if they're to anticipate the many twists and turns graphic storytelling will take in the future. Perez envisions the coming years will see a radical change in the comic book as we know it, though he feels that there will always be room for them as long as people are in tune with visual excitement and larger-than-life figures clad in gaudy attire, who give us vicarious feelings of power through their exploits. And in complex times, there is a greater need for a medium which presents good and evil on such an awesome and readily identifiable scale:

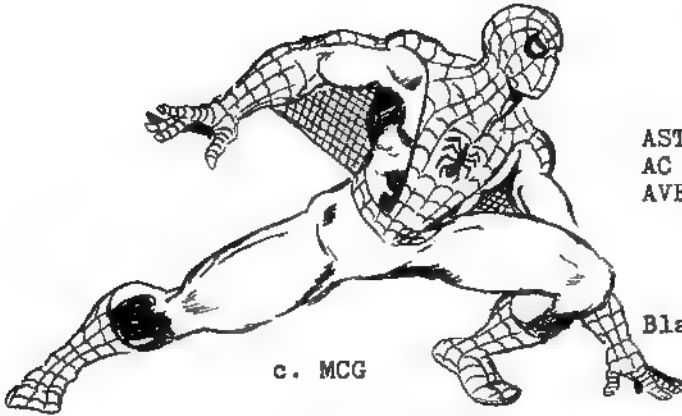
Comic books are a valuable medium with great potential. Although I would like to do other things, such as film on an amateur basis, I never want to leave this business, my first love, which has provided me with so many good times and a sense of notoriety you get in few other areas of endeavor. I may slow down at some point. I may do a little less work. But I don't think I would ever abandon comics entirely. Also, I think comics provides you with a sense of immortality. Not only in that your work lives on after you, but because you get to live on as a youth in your mind longer. It's the one job you never retire from. You cannot retire from being an artist. I may eventually go into painting, but I think my first love will always be those cartoon characters that have made me happy and I pray I can make others happy with.

And we wouldn't have it any other way!



c. DCC

INDEX



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ASTONISHING TALES #25

AC #2 (1976)

AVENGERS #141, 142, 143, 144, 147,
148, 149(&), 150(&), 151, 154,
155, 160(&), 161(&), 162(&),
163(*), 164(*), 165(*), 166(*),
167, 168, Annual #6.

Black Bolt Poster (1976)

COMIC PRESS #2 (1975), #3 (1976)

CONJURE #1 (1974)

Creation Program Book (1976)

CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #33, #34(&)

35, 36, 37

DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #6 thru 17

19 thru 22, 24, 30

DEFENDERS #51(*), 53(*), 54(*)

Enter the Dragon Poster (1974)

FACTORS UNKNOWN #2 (1970), #3 (1972)

FANTASTIC FOUR #164, 165, 166, 167,

170, 171 (except first 3 pages),

172, 176, 177, 178, 183(*),

184(&), 185(&), 186(&), 187(&),

188(&), 191(&), 192.

FOOM #19(*)

GHOST RIDER #26(*)

HAUNT OF HORROR #5 (next issue ad)

HOT SHOT #1(&)

HOT STUF #1

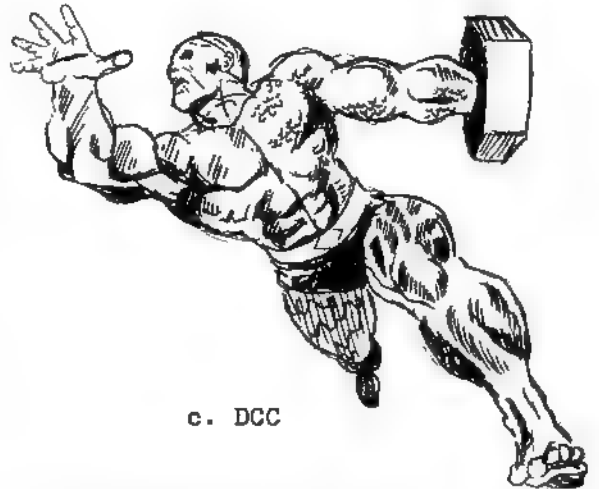
INHUMANS #1, 2, 3, 4, 8

IRON MAN #102(*), 103(*)

Limited Edition Portfolio (1977)

LOGAN'S RUN #1(&) thru 5(&)

Marvel Calendar Sept. 1977, Oct. 1978



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MARVEL PREVIEW #12 (2 page illo)

MARVEL TEAM-UP #65(*)

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #32(*), 33(*)

MONSTERS UNLEASHED #8

NOVA #14(*)

PLANET OF THE APES British weekly

#10(*)

POWER MAN #27

SCIENCE DIGEST Oct. 1975,

Nov. 1975, Jan. 1976.

STARCON 3 Program Book (1975)

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #9(*),

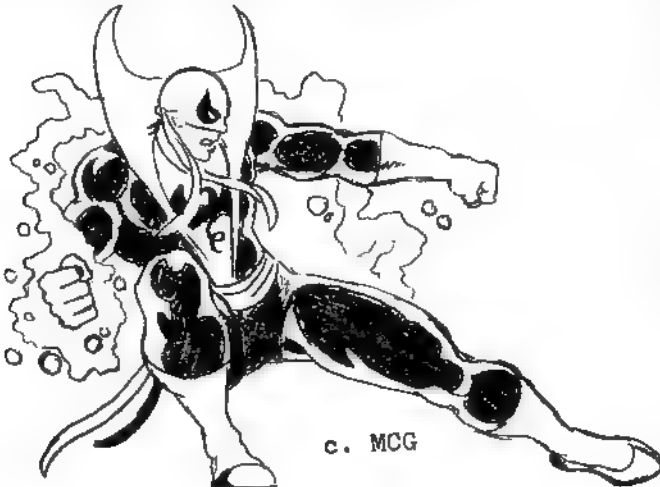
10(*)

UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE-FICTION

#2, 3.

(*) indicates cover only

(&) indicates cover and story



c. MCG



By

**GEORGE
BEREZ**











THE GUNFIGHTERS



ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE













KARLOFF THE ETERNAL MONSTER



JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

characters copyrighted by DC Comics

















ENCHANTRESS OF KAZO-NAL













DUNCAN IDAHO FROM DUNE
(Model — David M. Mead)

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CONAN IN THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT

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RED SONJA TRIUMPHS

(Model - Linda Behrie)

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DOCTOR DOOM

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